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STUDIES IN

GREEK SIGMATISM

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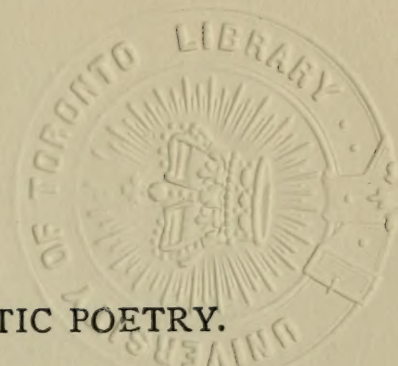
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#### IV.—SIGMATISM IN GREEK DRAMATIC POETRY.

Euripides' excessive use of the letter sigma attracted the attention of the comic poets of Athens and has continued to be the subject of comment in nearly all annotated editions of his plays.

Plato, the comic poet, Heortae, frag. 7, Meineke:

εὐ γέ σοι γένοιθ', ἡμᾶς ὅτι  
ἔσωσας ἐκ τῶν σίγμα τῶν Εὐριπίδου.

Eubulus, Dionysius, fragmenta 2 and 3:

Εὐριπίδου δ' ἔσωσας ὡς ἴσασί σοι,  
· · · · ·  
Παρθενεύσεις ἔξεις μοι χάριν,  
καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖσιν ἐγγελῶσι πῆμασιν  
τὰ σίγμα συλλέξαντες.

Eustathius to the Iliad 896, 56:

καὶ ἡ κωμῳδία μετὰ τὴν εὐρεσιν τῆς χρήσεως τοῦ  $\tau$  ἀντὶ τοῦ  $\sigma$  ἐπισημαίνεται χαίρειν ὡς ἀπαλλαγείσα τῶν σιγμάτων Εὐριπίδου.

To the Iliad 1170, 54:

ὁ φιλοσίγματος Εὐριπίδης κόσσαβον ἐν δυσι  $\sigma\sigma$  γράφει, ὅτι δὲ τῷ  $\sigma$  ἐχαιρεν Εὐριπίδης.

and to the Odyssey 1379, 58:

ὁ τοῦ σίγμα ἦχος λυπεῖ ὡς ἐν τῷ ἔσωσά σ' ὡς ἴσασι καὶ ἐξῆς τὸ τοῦ Εὐριπίδου.

The verse especially ridiculed is Medea 476:

ἔσωσά σ', ὡς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων ὅσοι.

Barnes, in his note to this verse, says, "Versum vero hunc Euripidis ob frequentiam τοῦ σίγμα a Poetis Comicis irrisum, mirisque aliquando in Athenis Theatro cachinnis exceptum aiunt". A similar note could be quoted from Porson, Schaefer,<sup>1</sup> and Elmsley, and from nearly all the various editions down to the edition of Professor Allen revised by Professor Moore, which has this note to the same verse: "A noteworthy example of Euripidean sigmatism".

<sup>1</sup> Schaefer's comment is in a note to Dion. Halicar., De Comp. Verb. 100-7. "Nemini opinor ignotum esse, quantum antiquis Atticis displicuerint Euripidis σίγματα; quem et Plato et Eubulus ob hanc causam deriserunt". Schaefer quotes this note from the previous edition of Jacob Upton.



The consensus of opinion of commentators is that Euripides was peculiar in his fondness for the letter sigma and that ὁ φιλοσίγματος Εὐριπίδης and "Euripidean sigmatism" are proper designations of a fact; also that Greek Comedy ridiculed and avoided this sigmatism.

The purpose of this paper is to study the use of sigmatism in the complete plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, and to see whether the phrase "Euripidean sigmatism" is a correct or a misleading one.

The particular verse most quoted is Medea, 476:

ἔσωσά σ', ὥς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων ὅσοι.

Here we have seven sigmas, six in the first seven syllables and one in the last. As this is the most famous example, I shall for purposes of comparison make this the standard of sigmatism.

#### AESCHYLUS.

Aeschylus has thirty-six verses with seven sigmas, and seven verses with more than seven. Noteworthy examples are:

P. V. 679: δσοις δεδορκῶς τοὺς ἐμοὺς κατὰ στίβους.

840-2: σαφῶς ἐπίστασ', Ἴόνιος κεκλήσεται  
τῆς σῆς πορείας μνῆμα τοῖς πᾶσιν βροτοῖς.  
σημεῖά σοι τάδ' ἐστὶ τῆς ἐμῆς φρενός.

Seventeen sigmas are thus crowded into three verses.

Sep. 125: δορυσσοῖς σαγαῖς πύλαις ἐβδόμαις.

This lyric verse of ten syllables has as many sigmas as the trimeter in Med.

Per. 144: πῶς ἄρα πράσσει Ξέρξης βασιλεύς.

406: . . . Περσίδος γλώσσης ῥόθος.

Ag. 338: εἰ δ' εὖσεβοῦσι τοὺς πολισσούχους θεούς.

1399: θανμάζομέν σου γλῶσσαν, ὥς θρασύστομος.

Here seven sigmas are crowded into four feet, while there are but six in the same number of feet in the ridiculed verse of Euripides.

Eumen. 754: ὦ Παλλὰς, ὦ σώσασα τοὺς ἐμοὺς δόμους.

This verse so closely resembles in its sigmatism the verse in the Medea that we can hardly think that a comic poet was in good faith when he ridiculed this verse in Euripides, since he must have been familiar with the similar sigmatism of Aeschylus. This verse in Eumenides denotes the extreme of gratitude and devotion felt by the rescued Orestes, so that if sigma by its hissing could have



denoted anger or contempt the poet would not have used it; thus the tone read into the sigmas of Medea 476 is false. Earle, in his edition of the Medea, says of verse 476, "The hissing in this and the following verse caused by the frequent sigmas is quite probably meant to be expressive of the speaker's contempt."

#### SOPHOCLES.

Sophocles has forty-two verses with seven sigmas, eight with eight, and four with nine.

Striking examples of sigmatism are:

Ai. 390: τοὺς τε δισσάρχας ὀλέσσας βασιλῆς.

Here in eleven syllables are found nine sigmas.

El. 775: προσῆλθε, ὅστις τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς γεγώς.

O. R. 425: ἃ σ' ἐξισώσει σοί τε καὶ τοῖς σοῖς τέκνοις.

940: τῆς Ἰσθμίας στήσουσιν, ὥς ἡνδᾶτ' ἐκεῖ.

1507: μηδ' ἐξισώσης τάσδε τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς.

Phil. 734: μῶν ἄλγος ἰσχεις τῆς παρεστώσης νόσου;

O. C. 411: τῆς σῆς ὑπ' ὀργῆς, σοῖς ὅταν στῶσιν τάφοις.

1342: ὥστ' ἐν δόμοισι τοῖσι σοῖς στήσω σ' ἄγων.

This verse has more sigmas than the one in the Medea, and has seven in seven consecutive syllables, while the Medea has but six in the same number. It is inconceivable that Sophocles would have written this verse for production before an audience that had already voiced its displeasure at a less pronounced sigmatism. Evidently the tradition that the verse in Euripides was received with mockery must have originated long after the production of the Medea. No poet so popular as Sophocles would have adopted the mannerism of another, a mannerism already offensive to the public. The tradition is accordingly false.

#### EURIPIDES.

Euripides has one-hundred-fifty-eight verses with seven sigmas, thirty-nine with eight, five with nine, and two with ten. The two verses with ten are tetrameters and are Or. 1553, Phoen. 594. In neither of these verses is there a marked sigmatism, as the extra syllables more than compensate for the extra sigmas.

Good examples of sigmatism are:

Alc. 241: λεύσσων βασιλέως, ὅστις ἀρίστης —.

Bacch. 443: ἄς δ' αὖ σὺ Βάκχας εἰρξας, ἄς συνήρπασας.

Hel. 889: εἰτ' αὖ μεθ' Ἡρας στᾶσα σὸν σῶσω βίον.



Had the verse in the *Medea* been derided for its sigmatism, Euripides could never have dared to employ for the same theatre the sigmatism of this verse in the *Helena*.

Heracl. 25: τοὺς κρείσσονας σέβοντες ἐξείργουσι γῆς.

432: ἤδη πρὸς ἅκταις ὄντες ὡς σεσωσμένοι.

H. F. 524: ὡς ἄσμενός σ' ἐσεῖδον ἐς φάος μολών.

I. A. 12: τί δὲ σὺ σκηνῆς ἐκτὸς αἰσσεις;

909: πρὸς γενειάδος δέ, πρὸς σῆς δεξιᾶς, πρὸς μητέρος.

Ion, 386: σὺ δ' οὐτ' ἔσωσας τὸν σὸν ὃν σῶσαι σ' ἐχρῆν.

This verse just quoted must antedate the ridicule of *Medea* 476.

806: σκηνὰς ἐς ἱερὰς τῆσδε λαθραίως πόσις.

Cycl. 379: δισσοὺς γ' ἀθρήσας κάπιβαστάσας χεροῖν.

295: παῖδας περισσῶς ἐκιδιάσκεσθαι σοφούς.

Med. 691: τί φῆς; σαφῶς μοι σὰς φράσον δυσθυμίας.

1149: παίδων μνσαχθεῖς εἰσόδους· πόσις δὲ σός.

Or. 450: μετὰδος φίλοισι σοῖσι σῆς εὐπραξίας.

1553: πρὸς κακῶς πράσσοντας, ὡς σὺ νῦν. Ὁρέστα, δυστυχεῖς.

This verse has ten sigmas, but its length makes the sigmatism very mild.

Phoen. 1089: ἐλθοῦσα τέρψω, τῆσδε γῆς σεσωσμένης.

It seems to me that the most strongly marked sigmatism in Euripides is found in I. T. 765:

τὸ σῶμα σώσας τοὺς λόγους σώσεις ἐμοί.

Here are nine sigmas in nine consecutive syllables, and in none of these syllables is the hissing of sigma stopped by its being pronounced in conjunction with another consonant. This verse has all this hissing, yet there can be no notion of "anger" or "contempt" thought of. To anticipate now a point to be discussed later, there are no double sigmas here and none of the sigmatism is of the sort that could be modified by the substitution of double tau. As the *Rhesus* evidently belongs to a later age than the other plays in the editions of Euripides, we might expect the criticism of Plato and Eubulus to be evident in a restricted use of sigma, but the sigmatism of the *Rhesus* does not differ from that of the genuine plays. Cf. *Rhesus* 866:

οὐκ οἶδα τοὺς σοὺς οὖς λέγεις Ὀδυσσεάς.

#### ARISTOPHANES.

The one definite thing in comments on sigmatism is that Attic Comedy would have none of it, so it is natural to expect a marked falling off in the sigmatism of Aristophanes, but instead of that there is a decided increase.



Aristophanes has one-hundred-twenty-five verses with seven sigmas, twenty-three with eight, six with nine, and two with ten. If we compare this with Euripides, we shall see that he has more verses with nine sigmas in eleven plays than Euripides has in nineteen, and that he has an average of eleven verses with seven sigmas in each play, while the average of Euripides is but eight. Although the plays of Aristophanes abound with parodies of Euripides, and he is often introduced speaking, not a single sigmatic verse is used in a parody of his plays or put in his mouth. Thus we are certain that Euripides lived and died and the Frogs was produced before anyone had seriously raised the issue of his use of sigma, else Aristophanes, ever on the alert for anything to fling at Euripides, would have introduced him hissing with sigmas. The following examples will illustrate Aristophanes' use of sigma:

- Nub. 554: ἐκστρέψας τοὺς ἡμετέρους Ἰππέας κακὸς κακῶς.  
 926: ΑΔ. ἧς ἐμνήσθης. ΔΙΚ. τῆς σῆς, πόλεως θ' ἦτις σε κτλ.  
 959: ἀλλ' ὦ πολλοῖς τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους ἤθεσι χρηστοῖς στεφανώσας.  
 Vesp. 557: . . . στρατιᾷς τοῖς ξυσσίτοις κτλ.  
 672: σὺ δὲ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀγαπᾷς τῆς σῆς τοὺς ἀργελόφους.  
 Pax, 867-9: ἔσωσα τοὺς Ἑλληνας, ὥστ'  
 ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς  
 ἀπαντας ὄντως ἀσφαλῶς —.  
 1101: ὡς οὐτος φοβερὸς τοῖς σπλάγχχνους ἐστὶν ὁ χρησμὸς.  
 Av. 629: ἐπαυχήσας δὲ τοῖσι σοῖς λόγοις.  
 1279: ὅσους τ' ἐραστὰς τῇδε τῆς χώρας ἔχεις.  
 Lys. 955: τῆς καλλίστης πασῶν ψευσθεῖς.  
 Thes. 61: συγγογγυλίσας καὶ συστρέψας. Cf. Lys. 975.  
 Ran. 391: τῆς σῆς ἐορτῆς ἀξίως.  
 547-8: πὺξ πατάξας μούξέκοψε  
 τοὺς χοροὺς τοὺς προσθίους;  
 999-1000: συστείλας, ἀκροισι  
 χρώμενος τοῖς ἰστίοις.  
 1033: Μουσαῖος δ' ἐξακέσεις τε νόσων καὶ χρησμούς, Ἡσίοδος δὲ  
 γῆς ἐργασίας.

This especially striking example of sigmatism, ten sigmas in one verse and three in the next two words, is found in the scene in Hades, where the speakers are Dionysus, Aeschylus and Euripides. These sigmas are spoken not by Euripides but by Aeschylus. Aristophanes must have used them in entire ignorance of the fact that repeated sigmas were to be carefully avoided, and that their free use was a decided defect in the style of Euripides. No better proof could be found for the belief that the aversion to



sigmatism is a figment of later erudition, and that the creative dramatic poets had no conception of such a thing.

Plutus, 223: τοὺς ξυγγεώργους κάλεσον, εὐρήσεις δ' ἴσως κτλ.

1201: ἤξει γὰρ ὁ νεανίσκος ὥς σ' εἰς ἐσπέραν.

In the much-criticised verse of the *Medea* six sigmas are used in seven syllables; Aristophanes has here put the same number into five. This verse in the *Plutus* is no parody, but is in the poet's own style, so that it is certain that the quips of comedy must have been unknown or ignored for many years after the death of Euripides. This single verse in itself is sufficient answer to all that is implied by the phrase "Euripidean sigmatism".

The results thus far obtained are as follows:

Aesch.	has	43	verses	with	7	or	more	sigmas,	an	average	of	6	+	to	a	play.
Soph.	"	54	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	8	—	"
Eurip.	"	214	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	11	+	"
Aristoph.	"	156	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	14	+	"

However, it is of little importance whether a writer has a few more or a few less, and one need not give statistics or discuss differences in the use of sigma, when we have such examples as these:

Eum. 754: ὦ Παλλὰς, ὦ σώσασα τοὺς ἐμοὺς δόμους.

O. C. 1342: ὥστ' ἐν δόμοισι τοῖσι σοῖς στήσω σ' ἄγων.

Plutus, 1201: ἤξει γὰρ ὁ νεανίσκος ὥς σ' εἰς ἐσπέραν.

Med. 476: ἔσωσά σ', ὡς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων ὕσοι.

It is perfectly clear that the sigmatism of all four of these poets is essentially the same, and that while certain poets showed their poetic dexterity by writing asigmatic verses (Athenaeus 455 c), the four great dramatic poets had no aversion to the free use of sigma.

Eustathius has this comment to *Iliad* 813, 43 ff.:

Αἶλιος δὲ Διονύσιος ἱστορεῖ τοὺς κωμικοὺς μάλιστα ἐκκλίνειν πᾶν τὸ ἔχον σιγμὸν . . . . λέγει δὲ καὶ ὅτι Περικλέα φασὶ πρῶτον ἐκκλίνειν τὸν διὰ τοῦ σ σχηματισμὸν τοῦ στόματος ὡς ἀπρεπῆ καὶ πλατὺν, γυμναζόμενον ἀεὶ πρὸς τὸ κάτοπτρον.

This would lead to the belief that the fashion, said to have been set by Pericles and presumably so universally followed by the comic poets of the next generation, was a fashion steadily growing into favor, so that we are to expect that we can trace a diminishing use of sigma in the later plays of Sophocles and Aristophanes, if not in those of "sigma-loving" Euripides. However, it is just in the *Oedipus Coloneus*, the last play of Sophocles, and *Plutus*, the last of Aristophanes, that we find the most pronounced



sigmatism. Either the tradition is false, or the fashion set by Pericles was ignored by these dramatic poets. As they wrote for popular approval they could hardly have ignored a canon of taste emanating from Pericles. The tradition concerning Pericles is probably false, and the facts show that the comic poets used sigma quite as freely as any one of the four poets studied. In proportion to their bulk the *Fragmenta Comicorum Graecorum* show just as free use of sigma as do the plays of Euripides.

The following examples quoted from Meineke will suffice :

Theopompus, *Hedychares* I :

καὶ στήτ' ἐφεξῆς κεστρέων νῆστις χορός.

Nicophon, *Aph. Gon.* I :

σέρφους ἰσως, σκώληκας, ἀκρίδας, πάρνοπας.

Antiphanes, *Epiclerus* 4 :

οὐδέεις, κακῶς δὲ πᾶς τις δὲ σοφῶς λέγει.

Exactly the sigmatism of *Medea* 476.

*Philoth.* I, 10 :

κεστρέύς, λεπισθείς, πασθείς στραφεῖς, χρωσθείς.

Here ten sigmas are crowded into a very cramped trimeter, which in prose would be read as eleven syllables. No verse in the four poets studied heaped up sigmas in the way this verse heaps them.

*Eubulus*, *Pan.* 4 :

ἐν λεπτοπήνοις ὕφεσιν ἐστώσας, ὄσας.

This is the poet who made fun of the sigmas of Euripides, yet he out-sigmas Euripides in this verse, putting seven sigmas in the space Euripides gave to six.

*Fabulae Incertae* XIX (*Eubulus*):

ταῖς ξυστίσιν ταῖς χρυσοπάστοις στρώννυται.

No verse in Euripides crowds more sigmas into the same space.

*Nicostratus*, *Syrus* 2 :

φασὶ στενωπὸν εἰς στενὸν στήσαι τινας.

*Alexis*, *Gal.* I, 4 :

ὥς φασ', Ἀρίστιππος σοφιστῆς εὐφνής.

*Hel.* 1 :

ὥς ὅστις αὐτῆς τῆς ἀκμῆς τῶν σωμάτων.

*Cyc.* 5 :

στήσας, συνάψας καρπίμοις κισσοῦ κλάδοις ἔστεψα.

*Diodorus*, *Epik.* 25 :

εἰς τὰς θυσίας ταύτας παρασίτους.

*Amphis.*, *Dith.* II, 2 :

ὥς ἔστ' ἐραστῆς, ὅστις.

The sigmatism of *Medea* 476.



These quotations are sufficient to show that the comic poets do not materially differ in their usage of sigmatism from the four poets studied above. It seems impossible that a theory so wide of the facts could ever have originated. The free use of sigma in both tragic and comic poetry might lead to the belief that something else is intended than the sigmatism I have investigated, and that it is the use of double sigma for double tau that is meant, but in no one of the passages ridiculed in Euripides is there a single verse where double tau might be used for double sigma, and in the discussion of this matter by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in *De Comp. Verb.* 100:

ἄχαρι δὲ καὶ ἀηδὲς τὸ σ, καὶ εἰ πλεονάσειε, σφόδρα λυπεῖ· θηριώδους γὰρ καὶ ἀλόγου μᾶλλον ἢ λογικῆς, ἐφάπτεσθαι δοκεῖ φωνῆς ὁ συριγμός. Τῶν γοῦν παλαιῶν σπανίως ἐχρῶντό τινες αὐτῷ καὶ πεφυλαγμένως· εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ ἀσίγμους φῶδες ὅλας ἐποίουν,

there is no mention of double sigma, but it is the sigmatism here studied which is condemned.

It is Lasus<sup>1</sup> of Hermione, the so-called teacher of Pindar, who won a certain kind of fame by producing asigmatic verses; but it was evidently a species of poetic gymnastics such as was later achieved by the poets of the *Ἰλιάς λειπογράμματος* and the *Ὀδύσσεια λειπογράμματος*, where the trick was to write the first book of each poem without α, the second without β, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Pindar seems to have had no aversion to sigma, as these few examples will show:

- O. VII, 34: βασιλεὺς ὁ μέγας χρυσέαις νιφάδεσσι.  
 68: ἐξοπίσω γέρας ἔσσεσθαι.  
 XII, 16: Κνωσίας σ' ἄμερσε πάτρας.  
 P. III, 70: ὅς Συρακόσσαισι νέμει βασιλεὺς πραῖς ἀστοῖς.  
 IV, 27: μῆδεσιν ἀνσπᾶσαντες ἀμοῖς.  
 60: χρησμός ὠρῶσεν μελίσσας Δελφίδος.  
 VIII, 80: νίκαις τρισσαῖς, ὦ ῥιστόμενες, δάμασας.

Here eleven syllables have nine sigmas.

- XII, 16: συλάσαις Μεδοίσας νίδς Δανάας.  
 N. VII, 72: γλώσσαν, ὅς ἐξέπεμψας παλαισμάτων.  
 I. II, 35: δισκήσαις ἀκοντίσσαιμι τοσοῦν' ὅσον.

Pindar is clearly not of those who shrank from sigmatism. Homer was a great source of sorrow to Eustathius because of his too free use of this despised letter (cf. any of the passages quoted above). If Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides,

<sup>1</sup> Athenaeus 455 c.

<sup>2</sup> Suidas, sub Νέστωρ Λαφανδὲς ἐκ Λυκίας.



Aristophanes and the Comic Poets knew nothing of the necessity of avoiding sigma, or at least did not put this knowledge into practise, there seems to have been a large field exempt in this regard from the working of the precepts of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the later commentators.

#### CONCLUSION.

The origin of the belief that the comic poets carefully avoided the free use of sigma and that Euripides was a peculiar sinner in this regard is to be found in the passages first quoted above, where Plato and Eubulus make a joke out of the sigmas of Medea 476. It was only a joke, and Eubulus himself did not shrink from a more lavish use of sigma, as has been already shown; while Plato, in the very play in which he raises a laugh at the sigmatism of Euripides, has a verse with exactly the same number of sigmas as the verse ridiculed, Heortae, frag. 5, Meineke:

*καὶ τᾷς ὀφρῦς σχάσασθε καὶ τᾷς ὀμφακᾷς.*

This is another of the jokes in regard to Euripides from the comic poets which has found its way into the learning of later ages; and that which was only a bit of nonsense, and intended as such, has been received as a piece of genuine literary criticism.

The phrases *ὁ φιλοσίγματος* and "Euripidean sigmatism", which rest on the assumption that Euripides in a peculiar way marred his style by an excessive use of sigma, have no basis of truth to support them. Here is one more illustration of the way the reputation of Euripides has suffered by scholars taking as sober fact an empty joke of the comic stage.











## VI.—EFFECT OF SIGMATISM AS SHOWN IN HOMER.

In the quarrel scene in Iliad A, 179 f. occur these words :

οἴκαδ' ἰὼν σὺν νηυσὶ τε σῆς καὶ σοῖς ἐτάροισιν  
Μυρμιδόνεσσιν ἄνασσε· σέθεν δ' ἐγὼ οὐκ ἀλεγίζω—

Professor Sterrett in his recent Edition of Selected Books of The Iliad makes the note " The hissing of the sigmas contributes to show the speaker's passionate excitement ". This is doubtless directly connected with the note in Ameis-Hentze, " Das gehäufte σ in 179 und 180 gibt der leidenschaftlichen Rede einen scharfen Ton ". These two comments are but typical of a whole series running back to Eustathius and from him to Dion. Hal., De Comp. Verb. 100. Some of these I gave in a former article (Vol. XIX 69 ff.). I shall repeat the note from Dionysius, as it is the centre of the problem :

ἄχαρι δὲ καὶ ἀηδὲς τὸ σ, καί, εἰ πλεονάσειε, σφρόδρα λυπεῖ· θηριώδους γὰρ καὶ ἀλόγον μᾶλλον ἢ λογικῆς ἐφάπτεσθαι δοκεῖ φωνῆς ὁ συριγμός.

The opinion current from Dionysius to the present is that sigma is especially the letter of rudeness or passionate anger, and that its repetition gives a disagreeable harshness to the tone. The notes I have quoted are simply applications or illustrations of a well-accepted theory. In the passage quoted from A there are seven sigmas in one verse and five in the other, or twelve in both. There are in Homer about three hundred examples of sigmatism as marked as this, so that in so great a number there might be found a few accompanying expressions of anger, joy, or sorrow and no safe conclusion could be drawn, but if practically all the examples belong to one class of emotions, then the conclusion is inevitable that the tone of sigmatism harmonizes with that class.

If there be any real sigmatic tone, the more sigmas any verse has the more distinct should be that tone, so that in verses with eight, nine, or ten sigmas the effect of sigmatism should be more clear than in a verse with but seven, as in A, 179.

There are in Homer about seventy verses with eight or more sigmas, so that it is safe to draw a conclusion of the effect of sigmatism from these seventy verses, if any conclusion can be drawn.



The Odyssey will be discussed in detail and the results thus obtained will be applied to the Iliad. I follow the text of Dindorf-Hentze. The Odyssey has thirty-five verses with eight or more sigmas each, and I wish to set these examples over against the theory of 'harsh, passionate, and disagreeable sigma'. They are as follows. The first example describes the lading of the ship for Telemachus:

β, 415: κάτθεσαν, ὥς ἐκέλευσεν Ὀδυσσεύς φίλος υἱός.  
 γ, 26: αὐτὸς ἐνὶ φρεσὶ σῆσι νοήσεις.

These are the encouraging words with which Athena tries to give spirit to Telemachus so that he may speak to Nestor. The next is from the speech he made to Nestor.

γ, 97: ἀλλ' εὖ μοι κατάλεξον, ὅπως ἦντησας ὅπωπῆς.  
 λίσσομαι, εἰ ποτέ τοι τι πατὴρ ἐμὸς ἐσθλὸς Ὀδυσσεύς  
 δ, 48: ἐς ῥ' ἀσαμίνθους βάντες ἐνξέστας λούσαντο. Found also ρ, 87.  
 δ, 241: ὅσσοι Ὀδυσσεύς ταλασίφρονός εἰσιν ἀεθλοί.  
 501: πέτρῃσιν μεγάλῃσι καὶ ἐξεσάωσε θαλάσσης.  
 582: στήσα νέας καὶ ἔρεξα τεληέσσας ἐκατόμβας.  
 844-5: ἔστι δέ τις νῆσος μέσση ἀλλ' πετρήεσσα,  
 μεσσηγὺς Ἰθάκης τε Σάμοιό τε παιπαλοέσσης.

These two verses have more sigmas than any other two consecutive verses in Homer, having sixteen, while in A, 179-80 there are but twelve. Nothing could be milder than this calm description of the islet Asteris.

ε, 269: γηθόσυνος δ' οὐρῷ πέτασ' ἰστία δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς.

ζ, 149: These are the introductory words in the speech Odysseus made to Nausicaa. Odysseus appeared before her naked and miserable, so undone by his exposures in the sea that his looks were repulsive (σμερδαλέος). His whole fate depended on his making the best possible impression with the means he had, but all he had was his language, so he risked his all on that. A coarse, harsh, or disagreeable beginning and all was lost. His speech was most alluring:

μελίχιον καὶ κερδαλέον φάτο μῦθον.  
 γοννοῦμαί σε, ἄνασσα· θεός νῦν τις, ἣ βροτός ἐσσι;  
 εἰ μὲν τις θεός ἐσσι,

Here in this introduction in twenty consecutive syllables twelve sigmas were used. Then later in the same speech, when most artful and flattering he said:

σοὶ δὲ θεοὶ τόσα δοῖεν, ὅσα φρεσὶ σῆσι μενοινᾷς.

Yet these sigmas were not "harsh and repulsive" but on the



contrary so winning and gentle was his speech that Nausicaa at once replied,

ξεῖν', ἐπεὶ οὔτε κακῶ οὔτ' ἄφρονι φωτὶ ἔοικας.

If in Homer there were an atom of truth in the oftquoted statement of Dionysius that "sigma is harsh and disagreeable and if repeated sorely displeases", Odysseus would never have come before Nausicaa with such a flood of sigmas, and if he had so come she would certainly have been alarmed and followed her maidens in flight.

The next passage with a verse containing eight sigmas is from the scene where Echeneus advises Alcinous to care for the prostrate suppliant, Odysseus.

η, 163: εἶσον ἀναστήσας, σὺ δὲ κηρύκεσσι κέλευσον—

ι, 300: ἄσπον ἰών, ξίφος ὃξὺ ἐρυσσάμενος—

ι, 324: τόσσον ξην μῆκος, τόσσον πάχος εἰσοράασθαι.

This is part of the famous description of the staff of the Cyclops. The verse which follows has more sigmas than any other verse in the *Odyssey*. The companions of Odysseus wonder:

κ, 45: ὅσος τις χρυσός τε καὶ ἄργυρος ἄσκῳ ἔνεστιν.

268: ἀξεις σῶν ἐτάρων. ἀλλὰ ξὺν τοῖσδεσι θᾶσσον—

From the entreaty of Eurylochus to flee from Circe's island:

κ, 329-30: σοὶ δέ τις ἐν στήθεσιν ἀκήλητος νόος ἐστίν.

ἢ σὺ γ' Ὀδυσσεύς ἐσσι πολύτροπος,

κ, 506: ἰστὸν δὲ στήσας ἀνά θ' ἰστία λευκὰ πετάσσας.

528: εἰς ἐρεβος στρέψας, αὐτὸς δ' ἀπονόσφι τραπέσθαι—

The last four verses spoken by Circe to Odysseus:

λ, 431: ἀσπάσιος παίδεσσιν ἰδὲ δμώεσσιν ἐμοῖσιν—

ν, 213: Ζεὺς σφεας τίσαιτο ἱκετήσιος, ὃς τε καὶ ἄλλους—

349-50: τοῦτο δέ τοι σπέος ἐστὶ κατηρεφές, ἔνθα σὺ πολλὰς

ἔρδεσκες νύμφησι τελέεσσας ἐκατόμβας.

These words are from the description of his own Ithaca, which Athena gave to Odysseus. The next describes the dogs of the Swineherd:

ξ, 22: τέσσαρες, οὓς ἔθρεψε συβώτης, ὄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν.

ο, 111-12: Τηλέμαχ', ἡ τοι νόστον, ὅπως φρεσὶ σῇσι μενοινᾷς,

ὧς τοι Ζεὺς τελέσειεν, ἐρίγδοντος πόσις Ἥρης.

These verses begin the farewell greetings of Menelaus to Telemachus. This king was always a perfect gentleman, polite and kindly. At the very spot where he was most courteous he used the most sigmas.



In the next verse Telemachus plans with Eumaeus for the comfort of Odysseus.

- π, 82: *εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις, σὺ κόμισσον ἐνὶ σταθμοῖσιν ἐρύξας·*  
 ρ, 449: *ὥς τις θαρσαλέος καὶ ἀναιδής ἐσσι προΐκτης.*  
 υ, 92: *τῆς δ' ἄρα κλαιούσης ὅπα σύνθετο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς.*  
 φ, 137, 164: *κλίνας κολλητῆσιν ἐνξέστης σανίδεσσιν·*  
 225: *ὥς δ' αὐτῶς Ὀδυσσεὺς κεφαλᾶς καὶ χεῖρας ἔκυσσεν.*  
 409: *ὥς ἄρ' ἄτερ σπουδῆς τάνυσεν μέγα τόξον Ὀδυσσεύς.*  
 χ, 74: *φάσγανά τε σπάσασθε καὶ ἀντίσχεσθε τραπέζας—*

Eurymachus tries with these words to encourage the suitors to resist Odysseus. They are spoken not in anger, but to cheer, and the speech begins with *ὦ φίλοι*.

- ω, 30: *ὥς ὄφελος τιμῆς ἀπονήμενος, ἥς περ ἄνασσες.*

From the address made by the shade of Achilles to the shade of Agamemnon. There are no other verses with eight or more sigmas in the *Odyssey*. Among so many examples there is not one case of passionate anger, but, with only three exceptions, all belong to calm description, or are spoken in tones of tenderness, politeness, or sadness. Not only is sigma associated with calmness, but whenever in the *Odyssey* a phrase is used implying the anger of the speaker, as for example *ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη*, the verse immediately following is practically asigmatic. This example will illustrate: When the utterly unworthy and immoral Melantho insults Odysseus, he replies:

- σ, 337: *τὴν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς·  
 ἦ τάχα Τηλεμάχῳ ἔρέω, κύον, οὔ' ἀγορεύεις.*

Only one sigma in this harsh and angry verse. Other verses illustrating this same rule are: θ, 166; ρ, 460; σ, 15, 389; τ, 71; χ, 35, 61, 321. These verses do not average two sigmas each. The conclusion to be drawn from calm verses abounding with sigmas and from angry verses without them is irresistible. The results obtained from a study of the *Odyssey* agree with those to be gained from the *Iliad*. The first marked example of sigmatism is Α, 83, where the priest turning in confidence says to Achilles:

- ἐν στήθεσσι τοῖσι. σὺ δὲ φράσαι, εἰ με σώσεις.*

Here are nine sigmas, yet editors pass it over in silence to comment on the angry tone of repeated sigmas in a verse containing but seven, Α, 179. The last pronounced case of sigmatism in the



Iliad is where Helen takes up the strain in the dirge chanted for Hector :

Ω, 771-2: ἄλλὰ σὺ τὸν γ' ἐπέεσσι παραιφάμενος κατέρυκες  
σῇ τ' ἀγανοφροσύνῃ καὶ σοῖς ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσιν.

The four cases of the extreme of Homeric sigmatism, description of the island Asteris, Odysseus' address to Nausicaa, Menelaus' farewell to Telemachus, and this lament of Helen over Hector, seem to me to give the exact tone of sigmatism in Homer. Sigma is so closely joined with the idea of calmness or gentleness that nearly all words of insult, anger, or reproach are asigmatic. Some of them are as follows :

κύον, κακαί, ἀμήχανε, νήπιοι, μαινόμενε, πόποι, πέπον, ὀλοώτατε, δαιμόνιε, μάντι κακῶν, φιλοκτεανώτατε πάντων, κερδαλεόφρον, ἀκριτόμνη, ἡπεροπεντά, ἰόωροι, βροτολοιγέ, μαιφόνε, κάκ' ἐλέγχεα, λωβητήρ, παρθενοπίπα, ἃ δεῖλ', βουγάιε, αἰνότατε, νηπύτιε, κυνάμνια.

This list is not complete, but it is certainly significant that so large a number of the words expressing passionate emotion are asigmatic. Not only do individual words of extreme anger rarely have sigma, but even whole verses expressing the most violent passion are asigmatic. I select the following six verses as denoting the highest pitch of passionate emotion.

Α, 149: Achilles' reply to the threat of Agamemnon to despoil him of his prize :

ὦ μοι, ἀναιδείην ἐπιειμένε, κερδαλεόφρον.

Ζ, 326: Hector returns to the city to urge the matrons to offer gifts to Athena, and finds Paris with Helen to whom he speaks with cutting words—*αἰσχροῖς ἐπέεσσιν*—as follows :

δαιμόνι', σὺ μὲν καλὰ χόλον τόνδ' ἔνθεο θυμῷ.

Δ, 385: Diomedes has been shot by an arrow to his great chagrin, and shouts in anger to the archer who wounded him :

τοξότα, λωβητήρ, κέραι ἀγλαέ, παρθενοπίπα,

Acamas, striving to rescue his slain brother, shouts :

Ξ, 479: Ἄργεῖοι ἰόωροι, ἀπειλάων ἀκώρητοι.

Χ, 345: If one single verse were to be selected, as the most passionate in Homer, it would certainly be this verse in which Achilles denies the request of Hector to save his body from the dogs and return it to his kinsmen :

μή με, κύον, γούνων γονάζω μηδὲ τοκήων.

x, 365: When the dying Hector foretells to Achilles his impending doom he answers:

τέθναθι· κῆρα δ' ἐγὼ τότε δέξομαι, ὅππότε κεν δῆ—

To these may be added these three verses from A:

106: μάντι κακῶν, οὐ πῶ ποτέ μοι τὸ κρήγνον εἶπας.

122: Ἄτρεϊδῃ κύδιστε, φιλοκτεανώτατε πάντων,

146: ἥε σύ, Πηλεΐδῃ, πάντων ἐκπαγλότατ' ἀνδρῶν.

And also

Ω, 262: ἀρνῶν ἡδ' ἐρίφων ἐπιδήμιοι ἀρπακτῆρες.

The whole subject of sigmatism has simply been allowed to go by default, and no one has taken the trouble to trace its origin and verify its application. In the former paper it was shown that Euripides was not especially prone to use sigmas, and that his reputation depends on a joke of two poets, Plato and Eubulus. The same jokes or joke is responsible for the theory of "passionate hissing sigma", as this theory depends on the fact that by chance the joke was directed against Medea 476:

ἔσωσά σ' ὥς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων ὅσοι κτλ.

Suppose, by chance, the joke had been directed against the grateful prayer of Orestes in Eumenides 754:

ὦ Παλλάς, ὦ σώσασα τοὺς ἐμὸς δόμονς,

or at Soph., O. R. 1481, where the blind Oedipus says to his daughters:

ὥς τὰς ἀδελφὰς τάσδε τὰς ἐμὰς χέρας,

or at 1507 of the same play, where Oedipus pleads with Creon:

μηδ' ἐξισώσης τάσδε τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς,

or at a hundred similar sigmatic passages, then commentators would call attention to the calm and tender tone conveyed by repeated sigmas.

Here it is surely once more evident how dangerous it is to build a theory on the unsupported jokes of Comedy.

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